

Live Bait & Ammo #16

Delphi has a new disclosure policy. Only official spokespersons can talk to the media. The policy blankets written, verbal, and internet communications regarding Delphi at home or at work. You can't say nothin to nobody about Delphi no time. The First Amendment be damned. You work for Delphi now. The National Labor Relations Act? Forget it. Delphi is above the law. Or so they think.

When I first approached Dennis Seeley, the personnel director who jumped ship when Delphi announced they were coming on board, and told him of my intentions to write and distribute an independent union newsletter, he was his usual self: arrogant, condescending, domineering, nonnegotiable, belligerent, bullheaded, and incapable of mediating a disagreement because he could only listen to himself.

In short, Seeley was typical of Labor Relations in Coopersville. I informed him that I understood the National Labor relations Act protected my right to distribute in non work areas during non work times. He adamantly refused to alter his position. I filed charges with the NLRB.

The official who took my deposition asked if I would drop charges if after subsequent conversations Mr. Seeley capitulated. I said, "of course." I spoke with Mr. Seeley again. He stubbornly refused to recognize rights guaranteed by federal law. He tried to intimidate me. Apparently the Labor Relations Department in Coopersville considers intimidation a sophisticated technique. Perhaps they confused Criminal Justice with Interpersonal Communications when they attended community college. I told the NLRB to press charges.

This time the straw boss took a different tone. He said he was going to let me distribute. No, I said you aren't going to let me distribute. Federal law lets me distribute.

I understand the law so I'm going to give you permission to distribute. No, you aren't giving me permission. Federal law gives me permission. I have a contract with the UAW that says on page... I cut him off. You can not enter into a contract that which supercedes federal law. Now let's understand something here. I'm not the one breaking the law, you are.

Shop rules and corporate dictums that inhibit a union member's right to speak or write freely are illegal. The US is not a banana republic. Ford Motor Co. tried to prevent Robert Lane from posting internal Ford documents on his web site, blueovalnews.com but District Court Judge Nancy Edmonds ruled that the First Amendment takes precedent.

If Delphi had better labor relations they wouldn't have to worry about people talking to the media or leaking sensitive information. The knee jerk repression of free speech is an indication of their paranoia and their lack of confidence in employee relations. Multi-national corporations fear words more than guns.

As if Big Brother's gag rule wasn't enough Delphi has now initiated a toll-free snitch line. Every spineless twit with a burr in his britches can squeal anonymously 24-7. Make it your business to protect your business by minding everyone else's business. I'm busy. How about you? The guarantee of anonymity ensures a mountain of unsubstantiated crap but the sifters and gleaners are professional bloodhounds and they're sure to sniff every crack of enlightened hearsay for the unmistakable odour of truth.

Whether or not anyone is ever held accountable for conflicts of interest, corruption, bribes, or kickbacks is irrelevant. It's the climate of trust and the feeling of security that is engendered by a twenty-four hour toll-free snitch line that is important. Henceforth the cardinal corporate virtues of honor, integrity, and loyalty will be fostered by tattling. Call 1-888-679-8848 today! No one will know you did it! It's easy! It's fun! And it won't cost you a dime! What are you waiting for?

I can picture the scene now. Battenberg's chronically unemployed son-in-law, Bobo, and a furloughed drunk from GM's venerable ranks, Mofo, are sitting in an outdoor cafe in Juarez, Mexico drinking shots of Tequila and spinning yoyos when the cell phone rings.

Bobo grabs it on the first ring. He's eager. He asks the who-what-when-where-how. Hangs up. We're in business. All right, Bobo. What is it? This guy says the quality on their new product line isn't allegedly up to par." So?

He says the product is being outsourced to a non-union company for inspection. So? He says there's nothing wrong with the quality. So? He says the Quality Control Engineer is part owner of the company where the work is being outsourced. So?

So isn't that a conflict of interest? Where's the conflict? An independent company, just like you and I, can inspect the product objectively with a clear and unbiased eye. Since it's a non-union shop, we get the job done a little cheaper and bleed the union crud.

But the engineer is part owner. So he makes a tidy profit in the bargain? It's the capitalist spirit, the great American way, baby.

But what if he's purposely undermining quality or altering data to funnel more work to his own shop? It all comes out in the wash. Look, our guys need these little ventures. It's motivational. Like a stock option. Forget it. We all do it.

Here, you want me to set you up in a little parts plant? We'll put it in your brother-in-law's name. Can't. I got him a job at GM Truck and Bus as a journeyman electrician. I didn't know he was an electrician. He's not. But no matter. The International promised to give him an appointment before he electrocutes somebody.

Hey we got another call. Make them wait, Bobo. Five ring minimum. Then put them on hold. It makes a good impression. Like we're busy.

Bobo was excited. Either he couldn't wait or he couldn't count. He picked it up on the third ring. Asked the ho-what-when-where-how. Hung up.

Call the vice squad. All right! What we got, Bobo? A woman six weeks from retirement walked out of the plant with a box of tissues in her handbag. Now that's a conflict of interest. Press charges. We'll get her fired for sure.

Don't laugh. The tissue issue is inflammatory. Recently in Coopersville the order came down from on high that Delphi would no longer supply employees with tissue. Buy your own, they said, you can afford it. Such a brilliant cost saving measure could only come from the highest echelon of the corporate hierarchy. With all the brown nosing that goes on around here you can well imagine how much the Corp. has to shell out for tissues.

One union member was not impressed. At the meeting where the new policy was announced she suggested that all the eighth level managers (we have about one for every hundred union members) give up their company car, their free gas and auto insurance, and the cell phones generously supplied by the company. She thought the savings would be much more significant than tissues.

Well that wiped the smile off Mr. Brown's face swifter than a wet fart. The policy was revoked in no time. Now we can wipe the snot off our schnozzes with good hygiene and grateful acknowledgement to the beneficent company that supplies this amenity gratis.

Employee relations are a high priority at Delphi. So what if we don't have a Local Agreement? Top level management has repeatedly made public pronouncements of its intention to work closely with the leadership of all the unions involved with Delphi..... sometimes.

Recently our plant witnessed a labor dispute that could easily have been avoided. A building contractor hired by Delphi brought non-union bricklayers into the plant. Ed DiEnno, our plant manager, could have put his foot down and demanded union bricklayers from the get go. Instead he shot himself first in one foot and then the other.

DiEnno was apprised of the dispute a week before the bricklayers union threw up a picket line. But all he did was turn his head when the contractor responded by hiring more non-union bricklayers to hurry and get the job done.

After some of our own UAW members refused to cross the picket line, DiEnno threatened to fire them. When the dissenters returned to work some of them refused to play the game and offered no excuses for their absence other than, I don't cross picket lines.

They were disciplined with a balance of the shift and two days suspension. But the two days was merely on paper. DiEnno wanted them back on the job. Lo and behold, some of them refused the paper discipline and took a few more days off. It was bow hunting season. Like I said, first

one foot and then the other. The construction project is now two weeks behind schedule and we ran production Thanksgiving weekend to catch up on unfilled orders.

The official word from the UAW was to cross the picket line: this is only an Informational Picket and our members should report to work as normal. People were confused. Where do we stand? One shop committee member said, We don't want to hurt the company. We have to take care of our customers. So we should hurt our union brothers and sisters?

Is this what the Rollover Caucus means by the New UAW? One UAW tradesman was so disgusted he went home and burned everything he owned with a UAW logo including his journeyman pin. If it hadn't been for Teamsters refusing to cross the picket line and thereby halting delivery, the dispute may never have been settled in the union's favor.

The slogan of the Rollover Caucus isn't Solidarity Forever, it's Solidarity for Some Maybe for a While or Until We Get Tired. UAW members from Local 2036 in Henderson, Kentucky have been locked out by Accuride Corp. for nineteen months.

Only a few weeks after an International rep told Local 2036 UAW members, We will stand behind you and with you for as long as it takes, the UAW International Executive Board decided without any warning to withdraw strike benefits and medical insurance from the members in distress. No explanation was given.

I guess the action speaks for itself. UAW member Steven Pierce wrote, The UAW International Union has succeeded where the company had failed, they have broken our union.

How does the Rollover Caucus expect to organize in the south after this betrayal? Southerners haven't forgotten the Civil War for Sherman's sake.

Does Yokich have Alzheimers? He certainly forgot every commitment he made at the Bargaining Convention. Or does he just think we're stupid? And what about the gentleman's agreement? Accuride supplies Ford.

How does this latest rollover fit into the modular spin off bust up the union scheme? Scabs at Caterpillar were forgiven back dues while the Local in Decatur was put into receivership by the IEB for failure to pay dues while locked out.

How many more times will the Rollover Caucus rollover before we All Fall Out? Call Solidarity House at 313-926-5000 and voice your outrage over this betrayal.

I sent a registered letter to President Yokich asking why Priority HMO handles all the major UAW contracts in southwest Michigan when the alternative HMO, Blue Care Network, is represented by the UAW.

I was informed that the UAW makes distinctions between organizations that are non-union and those that are anti-union. I'm confused. The statement sounds a little bit pregnant. As if to say, Are you a racist or a bigot? Cause if you're just a bigot we can work with you.

Dennis VanderLind, a UAW International rep sits on the Board of Directors at Priority HMO. I asked if Brother VanderLind had advocated for UAW representation at Priority HMO? No response. I asked if there had been any attempt to organize a union drive at Priority HMO? No response. I get the picture. Silence is worth more than a thousand words.

Last August Barbara Utter, a retiree from Local 488, wrote a letter to Yokich. She expressed dismay at the lack of visibility of our leadership. She appealed to the pres to come out of the bunker and demonstrate the assertiveness of a true social movement leader. She said, If you truly care about your union members, you must be available to them.

Brother Yokich displayed his charismatic hands-on leadership skills by delegating authority. He passed the buck to George Andros, Region 1-D Director, who responded: The problem as I see it is many of our members waste all their time and energy criticizing the UAW leadership rather than listening to, reading and understanding what the leadership are saying. He went on to say how much the leadership does for us, and recommended she become more actively involved in helping elect politicians who represent working people.

In 1998 working people in Michigan elected Fieger in the primary and the UAW leadership refused to support the people's choice with the people's CAP donations. How about we start by electing union reps who respect working people? I believe it was Thomas Jefferson who said, There's only one solution, more democracy. One person/one vote would make the leadership of the UAW more responsive, respectful, and accountable to the membership. But every time democracy comes up at the Constitutional Convention it's Cut the Mic time.

Our brothers and sisters at Saturn are fighting for a real contract. Currently they have a Memo of Understanding; 28 pages of gray matter that gives GM all the advantage and union members no protection. UAW members at Saturn are isolated in their confrontation against GM.

Though Saturn is owned by GM Saturn workers do not have a pension equal to other GM/UAW members, nor the same representation. Company/union appointees run the shop floor. It's a different kind of gulag down there in Tennessee. Recently the Public Review Board ruled that Saturn Local 1853 is accountable to the tune of \$1.6 million for withdrawing a grievance that had merit. Will their company partner go Dutch Treat on the tab?

One of their biggest problems at Saturn is rotating shifts. Workers are on days one week and nights the next. You can easily imagine the disruption to personal health and family life. What kind of company would put their workers through a meat grinder like that?

Neither GM nor the UAW Rollover Caucus appear concerned about the divorce rate, the suicide rate, or the mounting disability lawsuits. It's a tinderbox. GM and the Rollover Caucus could be in for a big surprise.

Parity and fair representation for all autoworkers is in all our best interests. We shouldn't allow GM to cut Saturn out of the fold. We shouldn't allow the Rollover Caucus to discriminate against the victims of the failed experiment in cooperation. Exercise your privilege as a UAW member. Call Solidarity House and voice your support for our brothers and sisters trapped in the Different Kind of Gulag.

On a positive note: management here in Coopersville has decided to do whatever it takes to detect scrap at the source and correct the problem rather than assemble the injector and scrap the whole component because of a defective ten cent part.

That means inspection, error proofing, and hopefully our suppliers will finally be held accountable for remuneration on sub standard parts. Elementary, you say? Well I admit a child could do the math but this would be a bold break with tradition in Coopersville, and from what I hear, many other shops around the country. Union members applaud the initiative.

No other management program would do more to preserve our jobs and make the company profitable than the elimination of excessive scrap. If management listens to employees on the shop floor, I'm sure we can succeed. We've heard it all before. Let's hope management follows through and first time quality becomes fact not fiction.

Speaking of fiction: Delphi Style Lean means to reduce inventories and ratchet up the rate of flow. The system is simple: reduce lot sizes. The result? Five times as much material handling. Workers are busy as bumble bees but produce less. Overtime is standard operating procedure.

Department 950, the standard bearer of Delphi Style Lean in Coopersville, has been working mandatory overtime to build buffers. What you say? Buffers? Why that ain't lean. No sirree. B-U-F-F-E-R-S spells trouble in River City. Yessirree, a mean scene. And that rhymes with lean. So there, you see, we did succeed in weaningwell, not inventory, but lots of jobs.

Won't the Music Man be proud!

In Solidarity,

UAW Local 2151